to eliminate delays in filling up the posts of Chief Executives of PSUs. These include monitoring of vacancies on regular basis, taking advance action by PESB for selection in respect of anticipated vacancies and prescribing time schedule for completion of formalities by the concerned Departments.

Statement

Sl.No.	Name of the PSU	Date of Vacancy
1	2	3
1.	British India Corpn. Ltd.	1.6.91
2.	Hindustan Photo Films Mfg. Co. Ltd.	1.10.92
3.	Bharat Bhari Udyog Nigam Ltd.	1.5.93
4.	Reyroll Burn Ltd.	22.12.93
5.	Handicrafts & Handlooms Exports Corpn.	9.11.94
6.	Bharat Aluminium Co. Ltd.	1.4.95
7.	Power Grid Corpn. Ltd.	31.7.95
8.	Tyre Corporation of India Ltd.	21.8.95
9.	Hindustan Copper Ltd.	31.8.95
10.	Indian Railway Finance Corpn. Ltd.	1.9.95
11.	Rail India Technical & Economic Service	1.11.95
12.	Kudremukh Iron Ore Co. Ltd.	1.12.95
13.	NEPA Ltd.	22.12.95
14.	Andaman & Nicobar Islands Forest & Plt. Dev. Corpn.	6.5.96
15.	National Fertilizers Ltd.	24.5.96
16.	North Eastern Handicrafts & Handlooms Dev. Corpn.	27.6.96
17.	Indian Railway Constn. Co. Ltd.	1.7.96
18.	Cochin Shipyard Ltd.	1.7.96
19.	National Instruments Ltd.	1.7.96
20.	Ferro Scrap Nigam Ltd.	9.7.96
21.	Hindustan Flurocarbons Ltd.	31.7.96
22.	Hindustan shipyard Ltd.	1.10.96
23.	Airports Authority of India	15.10.96
24.	Mazagon Dock Ltd.	1.12.96
25.	Tungabhadra Steel Products Ltd.	1.12.96
26.	Triveni Structurals Ltd.	1.12.96
27.	Sponge Iron India Ltd.	6.12.96

Free Trade Area

*17. SHRI AJAY CHAKRABORTY : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government propose to set up a "Free Trade Area" in the Eastern region involving Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and India;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Does not arise.

Loan Waiver Demand From Coffee Growers

*18. SHRI P.C. THOMAS : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the coffee growers who were pooling their produces to Coffee Board have demanded from the Board that their loan arrears may be waived in view of huge amounts contributed by them to Coffee Pool Fund with the Board and still not returned to them;

(b) whether the fund which accumulated by their contribution has been appropriated for payment of amounts to some employees;

(c) if so, how much amount was so utilised by the Board since its inception, till-date;

(d) whether the Board has now decided to spend the fund which is still unutilised;

(e) if so, the reasons therefor;

(f) whether the coffee farmers or their organisations were consulted in this regard;

(g) if so, the details thereof and the outcomes thereof; and

(h) if not, the action taken by the Board in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) to (h) The coffee growers have demanded for waiver of their loan arrears. However, their demand for waiver of loan is not becuase they have been contributing to the Pool Fund as Coffee Board has made payment to the growers out of the sale of coffee realised by the Pool Fund according to the kind, quality and quantity delivered to the Pool. The Pool

Fund has come into being from the sale of the coffee by the Board from the Surplus Pool. The money from the Pool Fund has been utilised with the approval of the Board to implement the Voluntary Retirement Scheme approved for the employees of the Marketing Directorate of the Board by the Govt. of India in 1994. The total amount spent out of the Pool Fund towards the implementation of the Voluntary Retirement Scheme approved in 1995 till date is Rs. 35.18 crore towards ex-gratia and leave encashment and Rs. 5.22 crores towards pensionary benefit. With the liberalisation of coffee marketing, the balance funds available in the Pool Fund after making payments due to the coffee growers will be utilised towards payment of ex-gratia pension and pensionary benefits to the remaining staff of the Marketing Directorate.

All decisions regarding payments towards implementation of Voluntary Retirement Schemes from out of the Pool Fund were taken after detailed discussions and deliberations by the respective committees of the Board and duly approved by the Board.

World Economic Forum

*19. SHRI SANAT KUMAR MANDAL :
SHRI NANDEO DIWATHE:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state

(a) whether India participated in the 26th annual meeting of the World Economic Forum held in Davos recently;

(b) if so, the composition of the Indian Delegation including the industrialists;

(c) the details of assurances given to multinational companies for investment in various sectors; and

(d) details of problematic areas identified for action to facilitate economic cooperation?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) Yes Sir.

(b) The composition of the official delegation to the 26th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum held in Davos is attached as *Statement*. Indian industrialists participated in the Davos meeting in their individual capacity. There was no officially approved delegation of industrialists.

(c) In his speech at the Plenary Session on 2nd February, 1997 on "Emerging Economies as the Driving Force of the Global Economy of the 21st Century" the Prime Minister observed that the multinationals have played a significant role in the global economy as the sources of technology and capital and they should play a positive role by creating sustainable relationships and partnerships with the host country.

(d) In his address to the India Session on 1st February, 1997 on "India Meeting the Challenges for High Growth" the Prime Minister indicated the strength and advantages of India for foreign investment. These include the largest democracy in the world, free and impartial judiciary and press, a large pool of skilled and English speaking manpower, ethical business practices and a large and dynamic private sector. Regarding some concerns expressed by others about the pace and directions of the economic reforms and apprehensions of political uncertainty, the Prime Minister indicated that the fact that several significant reforms in various sectors of the economy have been announced within a relatively short period should allay such fears by all.

Statement

Composition of the official Indian Delegation who participated at the 26th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum held at Davos is as follows:

1. The Prime Minister
2. Shri P. Chidambaram, Finance Minister
3. Shri T.R. Satish Chandran, Principal Secretary to PM
4. Shri M.S. Ahluwalia, Finance Secretary
5. Shri A.N. Ram, Secretary, MEA
6. Shri A.V. Gokak, Secretary, Deptt of Telecommunications
7. Shri S. Narendra, PIO
8. Shri K.P. Balakrishnan, Ambassdor of India, Berne
9. Shri S.S. Meenakshisundaram, Joint Secretary to PM
10. Miss Manjula Subramaniam, Joint Secretary to PM
11. Shri P.P. Shukla, Joint Secretary to PM

(Smt. Chenamma Deve Gowda, Personal medical and security staff and media representatives accompanied the delegation)

Debt Service Liability

*20. DR. RAMESH CHAND TOMAR:
SHRI DEVI BUX SINGH:

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) the debt service liability ratio of the country at present;

(b) whether the debt service liability ratio is likely to decline in near future; and

(c) it so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) The external debt-service ratio of the country (that is, the ratio of debt service to current receipts) for 1996-97 is expected to be around 25 per cent.

(b) and (c) The debt-service ratio has followed a declining trend in the recent years. After reaching a high of 35.3 per cent in 1990-91, the ratio declined to 25.7 per cent in 1995-96. The declining trend is expected to continue in future.